

Chapter 1

Introduction

Purpose and Need

This Planning Analysis/Environmental Assessment (PA/EA) will provide guidance for management of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administered Meadowood Farm property in Fairfax County, Virginia.

When approved, this Planning Analysis will provide the land-use planning decisions required by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA). The decisions will remain in effect until changed by a modification to this land-use plan or development of a new land-use plan. In either case, public participation will be an inherent part of the BLM's planning process.

The Environmental Assessment will document the analysis of impacts on the quality of the human environment, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Background

Meadowood Farm was privately owned until it was acquired by the Department of the Interior (DOI), BLM, on October 18, 2001. The acquisition was made possible through Section 165 of the 2001 Washington, D.C. Appropriations Act, which amended Section 1120(g) of the National Capital Revitalization and Self-Government Improvement Act of 1997 (D.C. Code, sec. 24-1201(g)) and Public Law 105-277 (The Lorton Technical Corrections Act of 1998). Section 165 authorized a complex set of land transactions facilitated by Fairfax County. These resulted in the acquisition of Meadowood Farm by BLM in exchange for federally owned land in the former Lorton Correctional Complex (Lorton).

The BLM Eastern States (ES) began the acquisition process in 1997 upon notification that Lorton would be closed and the property transferred from the District of Columbia Department of Corrections to the General Services Administration (GSA) for disposal. The Lorton Technical Corrections Act of 1998 presented the DOI, through the BLM, with an opportunity to select land at Lorton for possible transfer to DOI. The Act also provided an opportunity for DOI to acquire Meadowood Farm for recreation and public purposes in exchange for land at Lorton. When the GSA, BLM, the owners of Meadowood Farm, and Fairfax County agreed to the exchange, the BLM prepared a PA/EA addressing the acquisition and interim management of the property. The Decision Record for the acquisition PA/EA was signed on August 1, 2001. A copy of the acquisition PA/EA may be obtained by contacting ES at the address shown on the "Dear Reader" letter at the beginning of this document.

In response to public interest in BLM's acquisition and future management of Meadowood Farm, public (scoping) meetings were held in April 2000 and in May 2001. The purpose of these meetings was to identify issues or concerns the public would like to see addressed in the planning document and to develop a range of reasonable management alternatives.

The Draft PA/EA was released to the public on May 10, 2002, and contained a range of alternatives, including the preferred alternative, developed from input from those public meetings and information received during the scoping process.

Comments received on the Draft PA/EA resulted in additional data being incorporated into this document, the Proposed PA/EA. A total of 439 written comments, including form letters and petitions, was received on the Draft PA/EA. A public meeting held on May 22, 2002, was attended by 109 people, with 29 people providing oral comments on the Draft PA/EA. All the comments were analyzed using a systematic, objective, visible and traceable process, and are addressed in Chapter 5. The Proposed Action, which incorporates comments made on the Draft PA/EA, is presented in Chapter 2.

Description of the Planning Area

The Meadowood Farm property is located in Fairfax County, Virginia, along Gunston Road in Lorton. The property is approximately 800 acres and is bordered by Gunston Road, Old Colchester Road and Belmont Boulevard. Meadowood Farm consists of wooded acreage and open pastures. Support buildings on the property include a stable and indoor riding arena, maintenance sheds, and grooming stalls. There is one house that is being used by the BLM as the headquarters office for Meadowood Farm. There are four former residences on the property; one of which is scheduled to be demolished. See Appendix A, Maps 1 and 2, for the general location and surface features of the farm.

Planning Issues

Planning issues were identified by a team of BLM resource professionals using the scoping process, through public meetings, and through written comments received from interested people. Additional program issues were identified by the BLM to focus on specific questions about how Meadowood Farm and its resources should be managed. These issues or questions are

addressed in the analysis of the impacts of each of the alternatives and are resolved by the land-use decisions proposed in the Proposed PA/EA. For the Proposed PA/EA, the following issues/questions were identified:

What is the desired level of equine use that meets the needs and demands of the BLM and public, while sustaining a healthy ecosystem (i.e., plants, animals, soils, and water)?

What types and to what extent can competing recreational uses be allowed while preserving the recreational experiences of each visitor?

What intensity (level) of recreational use would meet the needs and demands of the BLM and public, while sustaining a healthy ecosystem (i.e., plants, animals, soils, and water)?

Planning Criteria

Planning criteria are rules for guiding the planning process. These rules include all applicable federal laws, regulations, executive orders, and policies. In addition, planning criteria may be specifically developed for a land-use plan. Laws and executive orders defining the BLM's responsibilities when preparing land-use plans and analyzing environmental impacts are:

The Clean Air Act, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 7401 et seq.

Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, 43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.

National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 470

Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, 16 U.S.C. 470 aa, et seq.

Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, 30 U.S.C. 1201 et seq.

Executive Order 11988, as amended, Floodplain Management, May 24, 1977

American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, 42 U.S.C. 1996

Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.

Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976, 42 U.S.C. 6901 et seq.

Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 9615

Safe Drinking Water Act, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 300f et seq.

Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1996

Clean Water Act of 1977, 33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.

Clean Water Act of 1987

Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands, May 24, 1977

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1271

Wilderness Act of 1964, 16 U.S.C. 1121 et seq.

Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 661-664

Coastal Zone Management Act, 16 U.S.C. 1451-1464
Coastal Barrier Resources Act of 1982, 16 U.S.C. 3501-3509
National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.
Lacy Act, as amended
Federal Noxious Weed Act of 1974, as amended
Executive Order 13112, Invasive Species, Feb. 3, 1999
Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, Feb. 11, 1994
Executive Order 12088, Federal Compliance with Pollution Control Standards (Amended by Executive Order 12580 Superfund Implementation), Oct. 13, 1978, Feb. 23, 1987
Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs, July 14, 1982

Document Format

This document is organized by chapters, with supporting documentation arranged in appendices. Chapter 1 lays out the background and introductory material. Chapter 2 is a discussion of the alternatives and the Proposed Action. Chapter 3 describes the affected environment. Chapter 4 discusses the impacts of each alternative, including the Proposed Action for management of Meadowood Farm. Chapter 5 addresses the comments received from public participation, and lists the persons, organizations and agencies contacted and/or who have had input into this document. It also lists the preparers of this document and includes a list of references. A Glossary is also included after Chapter 5. The appendices are:

Appendix A - Maps
Appendix B - Recreation and Visual Resources Management
Appendix C - Soils
Appendix D - Waste